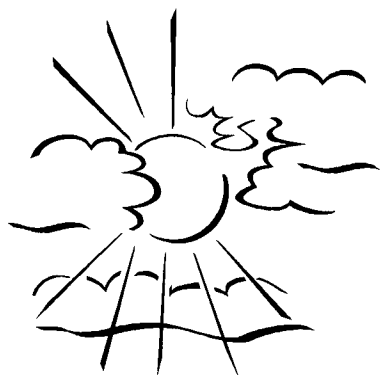


***Department
of
Human
Services***

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Wednesday, September 21, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Michigan Report

September 20, 2005

HUMAN SERVICES BUDGET GETS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

In what seems a rare move given the often contentious nature of the subject, there was no objection in conference committee to the budget that provides the state's welfare programs.

Both Democrats and Republicans praised Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood), chair of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee and of the conference committee, for working with them on the budget for the Department of Human Services (SB 271). But Mr. Hardiman warned there would be changes coming to the state's welfare system.

As expected, the budget, \$4.428 billion (\$1.081 billion general fund), a 3.9 percent increase (.46 percent GF) over current year, does not include House provisions that limit Family Independence Program recipients to 48 months of benefits over their lifetime. But Mr. Hardiman said the budget does include some penalties for those not seeking work and some incentives to encourage recipients to find work.

"We attempted to focus the cuts in administrative areas," he said, noting increases in foster care payments, to about \$37 per day from \$34, and restoration of the marriage and fatherhood initiatives, \$500,000 each in federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families funds.

Funding for welfare cases dropped \$12.7 million (\$4.1 million general fund) from the governor's recommendation under the expectation of fewer cases for the coming year.

The budget came in \$52,100 below the general fund target.

"Are we happy with this budget? Quite honestly I have to say probably not," said Rep. Rick Shaffer (R-Three Rivers), chair of the House Appropriations subcommittee and ranking House member on the conference committee. "Our side of the branch of government made significant cuts that were painful. I'm glad we were able to reach a compromise."

"It's not all I would like to see, but it's so much better than it was last year," said Sen. Martha Scott (D-Highland Park).

Mr. Hardiman said any limits on benefits or other changes to the program will be the focus of a bicameral committee he is planning on the welfare reform issue.

Michigan Report

September 20, 2005

OTHER BUDGETS: Getting quick approval by the Senate was the Department of Agriculture budget (SB 264), the Department of Human Services budget (SB 271), and the general government budget (SB 272).

D.L.E.G.: The final agreement for SB 276 boosts funding for local fire protection grants to \$7.2 million, all in restricted funds as the budget remained at the general fund target of \$70.4 million. The firefighter grants, to communities with state facilities, represents a \$3.7 million increase from the current year.

The agreement, approved by conferees late Tuesday afternoon, also retains a \$3 million cut in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation budget (a report must be provided to the Legislature in 30 days on the impact of the cut), and includes language requiring MEDC staff to work with the auditor general to review job creation claims by companies getting grants. It also requires a review of the best practices of economic development agencies in other states.

New language on the Work First program requires providers to develop individual short and long-term employment goals, and increases the combination of work, education and study hours heeded to meet work requirements.

The budget also includes new language barring the department from developing new mandatory rules on ergonomic regulations in workplaces, but does allow use of federal guidelines on a voluntary basis.

MEDICAID CO-PAYS, PRISON CLOSURES PASS HOUSE

A budget bill that would create new co-pays for Medicaid recipients, guarantee the closure of some prisons and probably result in the closure of another one unanimously passed the House on Tuesday.

The budget bill ([HB 4831](#)) contains spending for 2005-06 for the state's 28 community colleges, 15 public universities and the departments of Community Health, Corrections, Education, Environmental Quality and Natural Resources. The contents of these budgets have been known since last week when House-Senate conference committees agreed to compromises on each one.

The Department of Community Health budget includes new co-payments for Medicaid recipients – \$1 for outpatient services, \$2 on physician services, \$3 on emergency room visits and \$50 on the first day of an in-patient hospital stay, according to the Senate Fiscal Agency. The co-pays would raise \$2.3 million in new revenue.

Under the Department of Corrections budget, the state would close three prison facilities: Camps Sauble and Tuscola and the barracks at Marquette's Mangum Farm. Security levels would be reduced at five facilities, again in line with what the governor, House and Senate supported.

But the big question is whether Governor Jennifer Granholm will line-item veto \$17.8 million to fund the privately run Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin. Ms. Granholm's press secretary has said the governor is expected to strike the funding for the facility's contract.

For more details on the Corrections budget, see [Gongwer Michigan Report, September 15, 2005](#). For more details on the DCH budget, see [Gongwer Michigan Report, September 15, 2005](#).

COMMUNITY COLLEGES: Funding for operations at the state's 28 community colleges would not change under the budget bill passed Tuesday by the House.

The budget contains \$281.3 million, all general fund. That's a 0.2 percent increase from the current year.

EDUCATION: Wayne State University will still get \$50,000 for its middle school math training program under the conference agreement on the Department of Education budget passed by the House.

The department would receive \$117.8 million (\$16.5 million general fund). That's a 2.5 percent increase from the current year (36.9 percent decrease general fund).

Most of the cut was movement of the School Readiness Grants, \$12.25 million general fund, to the School Aid budget.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY: A major boost in funding from the refined petroleum fund – to help finance the cleanup of underground storage tanks – provided a big increase for the Department of Environmental Quality's budget.

The money from the refined petroleum fund, which used to be the Michigan Underground Storage Tank Fund, will total an additional \$102 million in the budget.

The budget also rejects a proposal from Ms. Granholm to end dam safety inspections, but does cut the amount spent on the program to \$315,900. Cut from the program was \$140,100 in funding used to inspect dams under the authority of the Department of Natural Resources.

Under the bill, general fund money would be removed from a program designed to solve conflicts between property owners over groundwater withdrawal issues although federal money would remain.

In total, the bill contains \$455.3 million (\$31.8 million general fund). That's a 16.5 percent increase from the current year (5.7 percent increase general fund).

HIGHER EDUCATION: A higher education budget with substantial spending increases for Grand Valley State, Oakland and Saginaw Valley State universities unanimously passed the House.

For a full explanation of the budget, see Gongwer Michigan Report, September 15, 2005 and Gongwer Michigan Report, September 13, 2005.

Overall, the budget contains \$1.73 billion (\$1.58 billion general fund). That's a 4.8 percent increase from the current year (0.7 percent increase general fund).

NATURAL RESOURCES: The budget for the Department of Natural Resources trims \$700,000 with two \$350,000 reductions each to the payments in lieu of taxes program and forest fire protection grants.

The agreement is a shift from the approach the House had taken by removing the entire \$700,000 from the forest fire grant program.

The \$350,000 cut in the PILT program, which sends money to schools and community colleges for state property in their districts, leaves the funding at \$7.45 million for 2005-

06, a 4.5 percent cut from what the governor recommended, with the reduction applied in a pro rata fashion across the state.

Overall the DNR budget contains \$272.9 million (\$25.6 million general fund). That's a 2 percent increase from the current year (10.2 percent decrease general fund).

HISTORY, ARTS AND LIBRARIES: Democrats registered strong opposition to the Department of History, Arts and Libraries budget because of spending cuts to libraries, but the House by a comfortable margin still sent the bill to Governor Jennifer Granholm.

The 11.3 percent cut, which includes a \$350,000 reduction to the Detroit Public Library, spurred 41 Democrats to oppose the bill (SB 274), but it still passed 68-41.

The bill also would slash arts grants by 17.5 percent. Funding for the arts would fall to just under \$10 million.

And the bill would drop the Granholm administration's proposed \$1.5 million cut to the Mackinac Island State Park.

Rep. Marsha Cheeks (D-Detroit), the top Democrat on the subcommittee that handles the department budget, said the elimination of aid to the Wayne County Library for the Blind triggered her opposition. Backers of the \$43,000 cut said the state funding is duplicative.

Ms. Cheeks hopes governor does what she can to restore the money in a supplemental, but she said there are some good things in the budget.

Rep. Fran Amos (R-Waterford), chair of the subcommittee that handles the department's budget, said libraries have been spared cuts in the past.

"We did cut the libraries, but they have not been cut in the last few years," she said. "We felt it was their turn."

Ms. Cheeks said she would have preferred to see funds go to libraries and not Mackinac Island, which could have raised fees. She said she hoped to see the funds to libraries and the library for the blind in Wayne County restored in a future supplemental bill.

Overall, the budget contains \$53.9 million (\$41.8 million general fund). That's an 8.9 percent cut from the current year (7.5 percent cut general fund).

Published September 21, 2005
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Legislature approves major parts of budget, holds off on many cuts

By Amy F. Bailey
Associated Press

Michigan lawmakers on Tuesday moved big pieces of the state budget closer to Gov. Jennifer Granholm's desk, including funding for higher education and programs to help low-income residents.

The roughly \$40 billion spending plan for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 mostly continues this year's funding levels. It avoids many high-profile cuts approved a few months ago by Republicans, who control the House.

GOP legislative leaders and the Democratic governor's administration were able to negotiate a balanced budget that has smaller reductions and avoids tax and fee increases. They got some help last month when economists projected that the state would take in \$66.8 million more than they originally forecast for the upcoming fiscal year.

The House unanimously approved a bill Tuesday that covers funding for community colleges, public universities and the departments of Community Health, Environmental Quality and Natural Resources. The Senate could take it up as early as today.

The compromise budget:

- Won't open the Medicaid program to new 19- and 20-year-olds and adults who are taking care of low-income children on Medicaid. People in those groups already receiving Medicaid will get more limited benefits.
- Includes a 3 percent reduction in state payments to health care providers who take care of Medicaid recipients.
- Requires that Medicaid recipients pay for part of their medical costs - \$1 for outpatient visits, \$2 for doctor's visits and \$50 for the first day of hospital stays - if they are not pregnant, disabled or under age 18.

The bill OK'd by the House includes \$1.73 billion for the state's 15 public universities. It gives small increases to Central Michigan, Grand Valley State, Saginaw Valley State and Oakland, and less funding to the other 11.

Katrina evacuees move from hotels into homes

Macomb County continues to give assistance to displaced.

PUBLISHED: September 21, 2005

By Chad Selweski
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

The caring hand extended by Macomb County to Hurricane Katrina victims has moved beyond the initial neighborly greeting -- offering the displaced a meal and a roof over their heads -- to something more substantial: a place they can call home.

With the number of Katrina evacuees in the county at 109 -- or 165, by one alternate estimate -- county officials and local charities are beginning to move them out of hotels and relatives' homes and into apartments, townhouses and houses.

"My goal is to have everyone who is known to us today in housing within two weeks," said Carrie Fortune, director of the Macomb Homeless Coalition, who has been working long days to meet the needs of the evacuees.

According to county estimates, about 40 Katrina survivors are living at the Comfort Inn in Mount Clemens, 30 are at the Sterling Inn in Sterling Heights and approximately 40 are staying with local friends or relatives. Fortune said her work lining up housing for evacuees indicates that the total number who fled here from the Gulf Coast is more likely at 165.

With 190 donated housing units lined up, the needs will be met.

Among the evacuees seeking assistance at the "one stop service shop" provided at the Mount Clemens Recreation Center on Tuesday was 87-year-old Irmatine Cowart, who fled New Orleans before Katrina hit. She has been staying at the Comfort Inn but officials expect to make arrangements this morning to move her into a senior citizen housing complex.

"I want to go home. I'm just waiting for them to say I can go back," said Cowart, who wonders what condition her Crescent City home is in. "But at my age, I don't want to go back yet, not with the way things are.

"I didn't dream I'd be caught up here like this."

With evacuees likely to stay in Macomb for months, county officials and local charities and churches have combined to provide housing, food, clothing, education, transportation, health care and job opportunities. At the Mount Clemens Recreation Center, those on hand ranged from the county **Department of Human Services** to the Salvation Army to St. John Hospital in Detroit.

"I don't think we're going to see any acute cases. I think what we're going to be dealing with here is mostly people with ongoing health problems, such as people with diabetes who don't have their medicine," said Dr. Devang Desai of St. John.

Also providing relief is the Macomb County Ministerial Alliance, a group of 12 black churches that has raised about \$9,000 for Katrina survivors. The alliance is offering "gap funding" to pay for items such as health care co-pays and car insurance.

Other churches have created "adopt a family" programs to address the overall needs of the evacuees.

County officials sprung into action a week after Katrina slammed the Gulf Coast, huddling together to provide an action plan for the governor's office within 24 hours. In addition to launching a fund-raising campaign, several county departments collaborated on providing a wide array of services when the first evacuees arrived Sept. 6.

Officials say some evacuees in southeast Michigan have migrated to Macomb because the services here are considered superior. Last week, federal officials awarded the county Community Services Agency a \$40,000 emergency allocation to help pay for assistance. More federal reimbursement is on the way.

"I think we're doing pretty well," said Vicki Wolber, the county's assistant director for emergency management. "All the evacuees' basic needs have been met."

But the one need that can't be provided -- hot Gulf Coast weather -- may cause some evacuees to head back south sooner than expected.

"About 50 percent don't know if they want to stay. Of the rest, about half say they want to stay and about half want to go home," Fortune said. "But some are already wearing their winter hats and asking for winter coats. So, I'm not sure how many will still be here once our real winter comes."

Published September 21, 2005
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Volunteers, donations still welcomed for storm victims

How to help

- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org or (800) HELP-NOW (435-7669)
- The Humane Society of the United States: www.hsus.org or (888) 259-5431

Local efforts

Here's a sampling of local fundraisers and requests for help:

- The Michigan Legislative Black Caucus plans to send trucks filled with supplies to Mobile and other parts of Alabama that have requested help.
- Formula, diapers, air mattresses and bedding are needed. Items may be dropped off at St. Stephen's Community Church, 1420 W. Oakland Ave. in Lansing.
- St. Vincent Catholic Charities, which is spearheading the relocation efforts locally, no longer needs household items but still is seeking monetary donations. Checks can be mailed to SVCC Katrina Relief Fund, 2800 W. Willow St., Lansing, MI 48917. To offer jobs or housing for evacuees, call 323-4734.
- To volunteer for the adopt-a-family program, which will link evacuees to residents who can help them settle in the area, call Central United Methodist Church, 485-9477.

Fundraisers

The following events will raise money for evacuees in Lansing, the American Red Cross or other hurricane relief efforts:

- "On One Accord - Uniting to Provide" is a concert hosted by Mizz Reality and Faith United Methodist Church, 6:30 p.m. Oct. 1 at the church, 4301 S. Waverly Road. Free-will offering, personal care items, air mattresses and cots will be accepted. Info: 719-8336.
- Lansing Tennis Classic will be held from Oct. 7 to Oct. 9 at Everett High School. Entry fee is \$20 for singles, \$15 per person for doubles. Registration and info: Brian Sullivan, 290-5322.
- "GIVE" is a concert with 18 bands, hosted by the organizers of Common Ground Music Festival and the first GIVE Benefit (2001). It opens at 11:30 a.m. Oct. 8 at Riverfront Park in Lansing. Admission: \$10 for adults, \$5 for 12 and under. Info: 267-1502 or www.givebenefit.org.

September 21, 2005

Displaced family overwhelmed by Metro hospitality

After reading evacuees' story in The News, area residents offer housing, medical care, kindness.

By Francis X. Donnelly / The Detroit News

The last time Phyliss Logan visited Detroit, 14 years ago, she asked a stranger for a light. The man told her to buy a lighter.

This time around, the reception has been a little warmer.

Logan, who came here with five relatives to escape hurricane-ravaged New Orleans, has been embraced by her adopted home. As she wades through the generous offers of help, Logan pursues several tasks ranging from finding housing close enough for her daughter to get to high school to securing medical care for her father.

Metro Detroit residents responding to a story about the family's plight in The Detroit News last week have offered homes, jobs, money, medical care and transportation. The story described how Logan has little money or possessions as she encounters challenges adapting to a new life in Detroit.

"People are calling to say, 'What do you need?'" said Logan, 51, a former bank data processor. "I don't even know how they found me." Among the responses were 62 people offering wheelchairs, canes, walkers and shower chairs for Logan's 84-year-old father, who had suffered a stroke.

A retired Detroit city policeman said he could ferry the family around town on errands.

A church has offered a remodeled house with four bedrooms in Highland Township, while a resident has offered a mostly furnished home with three bedrooms elsewhere in Oakland County.

The residents, businesses and social groups said they wanted to do whatever they could to help.

Dena Pettway, in her 70s, said she had helped run a successful adult foster care facility and wanted to share her good fortune with the Logans. She gave them an unspecified amount of money.

"Many people have suffered like that," she said. "Some people have so much and others have nothing."

Scattered across U.S.

Relief Organizations:

Red Cross; 1-800-HELP-NOW

Salvation Army; 1-800-SAL-ARMY

Catholic Charities; 1-800-919-9338

American Jewish Committee's Hurricane Katrina Fund

Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund
America's Second Harvest

Network

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

Episcopal Relief & Development; 1-800-334-7626

United Methodist Committee on Relief; 1-800-554-8583
Operation Blessing, a Christian relief organization
Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief

National Arab American Medical Association; (248) 646-3661

Christian Disaster Response
The Humane Society of the United States
AmeriCares

ELCA Domestic Disaster Response/Lutheran Disaster Response

Habitat for Humanity International

Church World Service

Network for Good
Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Michigan's Hurricane Hotline (offers of goods and services): 888-535-6136

B'nai B'rith Disaster Relief Fund

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

Faithfest.net

NAACP Disaster Relief Fund

Presbyterian Church Disaster Program

United Jewish Communities

Every few days, the Logans get calls from relatives who were missing after the flooding of New Orleans. They're popping up all over the country.

One was flown to a nursing home in Omaha. Another is staying at the Astrodome in Houston. A third was bused to Dallas. Others are in Atlanta, Natchez, Miss., and Baton Rouge, La.

Once living within several miles of each other in New Orleans, the extended Logan clan is widely scattered.

The relatives call to say they're OK and that they miss their homes, Logan said. So does she, but she's glad they're alive.

"It's rough," she said. "It's like it turned our life upside down."

And they can't begin to imagine what's in store for the region now, as the Gulf Coast is threatened yet again with Hurricane Rita gathering strength with the warm ocean water.

"Considering what we've been through and now another hurricane is threatening, it's scary.

Really scary," Phyliss Logan said. "But I don't think too much about it, because there's nothing I can do."

In Detroit, one thing bringing stability to her life is the school system. Her daughter, Lajuanda, 16, started at Redford High last week.

It hasn't been as tough an adjustment as the teen had feared. There's little difference between the schools, she said. The Detroit teachers are as firm as the ones in New Orleans, while the students are just as rambunctious.

In just a few days, the 11th-grader thinks she has found classmates who will become close friends.

Still, she doesn't always understand what the Detroit kids are talking about. Their slang is a bit different from that used in New Orleans.

"I have to think about what they're talking about," she said. "They have different words for different things. If they like something, they say it's sweet. We just say it's tight or it's cool."

Necessities left behind

Phyliss Logan's father, Samuel Scott Jr. is bent at the waist and slowly shuffles his feet while walking in the home of a Detroit relative.

Scott, a retired machinist for a homebuilding company, sometimes feels like he made the trip from New Orleans by foot.

"You're wearing me out," he told his children last week.

"You need exercise," Logan said.

"Yeah but you're exercising me too much."

In Louisiana, Scott got around by using a wheelchair, walker and cane. But the family left all that stuff behind.

The retiree went to Providence Hospital in Southfield last week after getting a sharp pain in his neck. He suffers from tendonitis.

As Phyliss Logan begins to sift through the outpouring of support from Metro Detroit, medical care for her father is at the top of her list.

A social worker for the Veterans Administration in Michigan has offered to ease their way into the system while Covenant Community Care in Detroit offered medical treatment.

Many residents clambered through their closets and attics to see what old medical supplies they could provide Scott.

In the case of Rowena Garner, it was a wheelchair that had been used by her late father.

Garner, 78, mostly confined to a wheelchair herself because of arthritis, said she couldn't do much for Scott but wanted to do something.

"I wish I could do more," she said. "I wish I was more able-bodied. But this is something I can do."

"Phyliss Logan said she's humbled by the response of a city she once found cold.

"I just keep saying, 'People are so nice,'" she said.

Once snubbed for a light in Detroit, she feels like other residents have helped dispel the darkness surrounding her family the past few weeks.

You can reach Francis X. Donnelly at (313) 223-4186 or fdonnelly@detnews.com.

Detroit News

September 21, 2005

Storm kids misplaced, not missing

Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Authorities trying to track down more than 2,600 children in Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama missing three weeks after Hurricane Katrina believe that most of them are not really “missing,” only “lost” during the rush to rescue hurricane victims.

Ernie Allen of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children said many are cases of people reporting children missing, only to discover they were safe with a relative who did not know how to find the parents.

The Alexandria, Va., center has resolved 966 out of 3,600 Hurricane Katrina cases, Allen said.

Aunt blamed for boy's injuries

Officials say abuse by Mount Clemens woman left toddler blind, brain damaged

PUBLISHED: September 21, 2005

By Chad Halcom
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Two-year-old Philip Baumer has a home and the love of a new adoptive family in Shelby Township, but officials say he may literally never get to see that family or speak to them because of injuries suffered from alleged child abuse by a Mount Clemens area woman who used to care for him.

"It's a daily set of challenges. He has got to see a specialist, and neurologists, and have proper care," said Philip Zentz, the foster father who adopted Philip after the Baumer family lost parental rights to the child. "Some things are going to be hard (for him)."

Testimony began Tuesday in the trial of Julie Baumer, 27, on a charge of first-degree child abuse for an October 2003 incident when Philip was just 6 weeks old. Family members and court officials said the child is now blind, cannot speak and has severe brain damage following a period when he was in the care of Miss Baumer, his aunt.

"There's no question that Philip (Baumer) is in bad shape. But the only issue, except for some small side issues, in this case is -- did it happen on Julie's watch?" said defense attorney Elias Muawad. "We believe the prosecution is unable to prove that it did."

Indeed, officials noted that Philip had some obstacles in his life before being hospitalized on Oct. 3, 2003, with a skull fracture and internal cranial bleeding. Julie Baumer had been caring for the child roughly six days prior to that because his biological mother, Victoria Baumer, had been addicted to crack cocaine during his pregnancy and birth, and had recently sought rehabilitation treatment.

The defense began presenting a case that claimed the origin and date of Philip Baumer's injuries are hard to determine because of those facts and other background factors, although Zentz and his family said they feel fairly certain of what happened to the child.

"We call it 'non-accidental trauma.'" testified Steven Ham, a pediatric neurosurgeon for Children's Hospital of Michigan who has been treating

the child. "I'm convinced that level of brain injury and trauma came from abuse to the child."

However, Ham also testified that he cannot ascertain who abused the child or when it happened -- medical science can pin down the time of injury to within a matter of days but not hours, he said. Macomb County assistant prosecutor Maryann Bruder claims the abuse had to occur within a window of time when only the defendant was caring for him.

The trial continues today before Macomb County Circuit Judge James M. Biernat. Baumer remains free on bond, and could face up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

Child molester draws long prison term

Wednesday, September 21, 2005

By John S. Hausman

MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

"Wally should stay in jail forever, because he did something very, very bad."

That's what a 6-year-old rape victim said in a letter to a judge, and it may well be the fate of child molester Wallace Anthony Cooper.

The 43-year-old Fruitport Township man will be in prison for at least the next 30 years -- and possibly as much as 44 years, if he lives that long -- for raping two 6-year-old girls known to him, videotaping the acts and committing other crimes.

Cooper, of 3332 Pinebrook, on Tuesday got concurrent sentences of 28 to 42 years for three counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct with a child younger than 13, in two separate cases; 26 to 40 years for producing child sexually abusive materials; and five to eight years for possessing marijuana with intent to deliver.

In addition to those simultaneous sentences, 14th Circuit Judge William C. Marietti also ordered Cooper to serve an additional two years for three felony firearm convictions. By law, the firearm sentences must be served before the other terms begin.

Cooper pleaded no contest as charged to all eight counts last month. He was sentenced as a third-time habitual offender, based on two 1979 convictions of breaking and entering a building. He was in prison from 1979 to 1983 on those convictions, according to state records.

The 28-year minimum sentences on the rape convictions were at the top of state sentencing guidelines, which called for a minimum term of at least 11 1/4 years but no more than 28 years, one month. Usually, Marietti hands out minimum sentences at the midpoint of state guidelines, which in this case would have meant a minimum of about 19 years.

Before pronouncing sentence, Marietti said his goal is to protect other children by ensuring Cooper will remain behind bars "at least until you're in your mid-70s," with Corrections Department officials having the right to hold him until he's 87 years old if future parole boards refuse to free him sooner. The judge said he hoped Cooper would, by the time he's released, be incapable of victimizing children.

"I had the unpleasant experience of having to watch the videotape," Marietti said. "No way can (any sentence) make up for the damage suffered by these young girls. ... Somewhere down the line ... this offense will cast a shadow on the rest of their lives."

Senior Assistant Prosecutor Joseph Bader earlier argued for an even longer sentence exceeding state guidelines.

After reading the excerpt from the victim's letter -- neither child was in court for the sentencing, although relatives were -- Bader asked Marietti "to ensure that 'Wally' stays in jail for the rest of his life.

"I don't think the guidelines adequately weigh the abuse suffered by these girls over a period of time."

Cooper's only statement was: "I'm sorry for what I've done wrong."

Authorities say the molestations with which Cooper was charged happened on at least two separate days at Cooper's home. On June 21, he molested both girls; on July 1, he sexually

assaulted one of them and videotaped it. Officials believe other molestations of both children happened elsewhere on other occasions, including on a Newaygo County camping trip Cooper took the girls on in late June.

In a search of Cooper's home, Fruitport Township police seized a computer and video equipment, including videos that showed the unemployed man engaged in sex acts with a child. Police also found a large quantity of marijuana, packaging materials and a scale; and a Ruger handgun, two rifles and a shotgun.

The abuse came to light when one of the girls disclosed it to her parents June 30 after they noticed she was acting strangely following the campout.

Woman Sentenced For Having Sex With Fiance's Son

Judge Prohibits Contact Between Woman, Teenager

POSTED: 3:47 pm EDT September 20, 2005

BAY CITY, Mich. -- A woman who police say had sex with her fiance's 14-year-old son and later gave birth to the teenager's baby, has been sentenced to a year in jail.

Amy Dyjak, a 25-year-old Bay City resident, received credit for 284 days served since her December arrest.

According to the teenager, Dyjak got him drunk and high on marijuana, and had sex with him several times in September 2003. The victim is now 16.

Dyjak originally was charged with four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, three counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct and three counts of delivery of marijuana.

She pleaded no contest to one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct, and the other felonies were dismissed. A no contest plea is not an admission of guilt but is treated as such for sentencing purposes.

During sentencing Monday, Bay County Circuit Judge Kenneth W. Schmidt prohibited contact between Dyjak and the 15-month-old and ordered Dyjak to undergo sex offender and substance abuse counseling.

A probate judge terminated Dyjak's parental rights earlier this month.

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Child falls asleep on bus, gets injured

Wednesday, September 21, 2005

JOE SNAPPER
THE SAGINAW NEWS

The mother of a Carrollton Public Schools student is demanding leaders accept responsibility for her 4-year-old son splitting open his forehead after falling asleep on a bus.

Tuckered out from his first full day of kindergarten, Marlon Wilkins Jr. slipped into a nap on the way home, and his 10-year-old sister forgot to wake him at their stop, their mother said.

A frantic Maria Wilkins of Carrollton Township called school officials, who alerted the driver. A half-hour later, the bus pulled up to the Wilkins' home and off walked 4-year-old Marlon, slightly dazed.

"My son was full of blood," his 37-year-old mother said of the Monday incident. "He had gashed his head open."

Wilkins blames the bus driver, whose job she says is to make sure young riders get off at their stops.

"It doesn't make sense for a 4-year-old to get injured like that," the mother said. "They say it's not their responsibility."

But school leaders said drivers are responsible only to make sure buses are empty when they are parked for the night. If they find a child who failed to get off at his or her stop, the driver takes the child home, Superintendent Craig C. Douglas said.

Trying to require bus drivers to keep tabs on each student's stop -- especially when students might get off at different stops on different days -- is "impractical," Douglas said.

"I have no reason to believe the bus driver did anything other than be responsible," Douglas said, "because it's not unusual for the younger kids to fall asleep."

Douglas said that after the boy fell asleep, he rolled off a bus seat when the driver braked, cutting his head.

Wilkins said she took her son to the St. Mary's of Michigan Ambulatory Care Center, where doctors "derma-bonded" his forehead closed without using stitches, she said.

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Baby sale brings jail

Wednesday, September 21, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

WILLIAMSBURG, KY. -- A Kentucky woman will serve two years behind bars for selling her 10-month-old daughter to a Lake County woman for \$5,000 in March, her attorney said Tuesday. Jessica Cornett, 18, was sentenced Tuesday by a Kentucky judge, who earlier sentenced Kimberly Brick, 30, of Chase, to a three-year probationary term for buying the infant. Cornett and Brick have agreed to testify against Kenneth Couch, Cornett's boyfriend, who is not the father of the child, in an upcoming trial. Police said Couch came up with the baby-sale scheme. Brick and Cornett each pleaded guilty to being involved in the sale of a child. Couch has pleaded not guilty and is set for trial in January.

Sex-offender ban is fraught with problems

Port Huron Times Herald Editorial

September 21, 2005

Proposed state legislation an inefficient way to protect children

State lawmakers are trying to make children safer, and that's commendable. But they're using a sledgehammer to swat a fly.

No one wants sexual predators to put our children at risk. Reasonable steps to ban such offenders from schools and day-care facilities make perfect sense.

Prevent anyone who works at a school or day-care facility to do so if they have been convicted of sexual crimes against children. Submit all employees to a criminal background search. The state's proposed remedy, however, goes too far.

A package of bills calling for tougher rules on sex offenders is awaiting Gov. Jennifer Granholm's signature. Prompted by Granholm's call, the measures would ban registered sex offenders from living or working within 1,000 feet of a school or day-care businesses. Although the legislation sounds effective, the devil is in the details.

When the public thinks of sexual predators who threaten children, pedophiles, rapists and similar deviants come to mind. But the proposed laws don't make any distinctions. Anyone who ends up on the state's sex-offender registry is subject to the ban. That includes teens who engaged in sex that was consensual but illegal because of the age of consent.

If that net seems too wide, not to worry. Although the legislation includes everyone on the sex-offender registry after it takes effect, current registered sex offenders would be exempt.

The legislation's point is to protect children from predators. Yet, the majority of convicted child molesters, rapists and other registered offenders can live and work as close they want to schools and day-care facilities. Port Huron has 167 offenders on the registry.

Then, there are the ongoing questions about the registry's credibility. A state audit released in July said the Michigan State Police did not have procedures to verify the accuracy of data including sex offenders' names and addresses.

Auditors also found information on Michigan's two registries - one for the public, the other a more detailed listing for law enforcement - did not match. The public database lists 20,000 offenders, while the police list catalogs 36,900.

These failings ought to be enough to reconsider this legislation. After all, our children's safety ought to be important enough to be defended with the best possible means, not a shotgun approach that carries the potential for more missteps than successes.

Child predators ought not to be at schools or day-care facilities. The reasonable step is to make sure they aren't employees.

Enforcing 1,000-foot bans is time-consuming, ineffective and unrealistic. Police have enough to do without policing a prohibition that's unlikely, if not impossible, to adequately enforce.

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Deal sought to find care for disabled adults

Wednesday, September 21, 2005

By Greg Chandler
The Grand Rapids Press

OTTAWA COUNTY -- Mental health officials in Ottawa County will sit down with representatives of a Jenison-based organization to determine whether some adult clients with severe physical and developmental disabilities can be placed in a recently completed residential facility.

Community Mental Health Board Chairman Fred Vander Laan asked Monday that CMH Executive Director Gerry Cyranowski meet with officials from Harbor House Ministries to explore possibilities for funding clients at a second 12-bed home in Jenison that was certified to open last month.

"It's an excellent facility," Vander Laan said. "I think they have resources we need and we can use."

CMH has received more than 30 requests from families of clients asking to have their adult children placed at Harbor House. To date, agency officials have held off on making any placements, saying they do not have the funds needed to pay for additional support.

However, Vander Laan is hopeful something can be worked out.

"We need to put this issue to rest," he said. "We need to move on."

Harbor House Executive Director Jean MacDonald praised Vander Laan for urging a meeting between the two sides. "I'm thrilled," she said.

CMH provides full Medicaid funding support for nine residents and partial support for a 10th at Harbor House's first group home at an annual cost of about \$750,000. While such funding cannot be used for room and board, it is used for covering the cost of personal care and community living support for residents, Cyranowski said.

Cyranowski said earlier he had warned Harbor House that CMH may not be able to provide future financial support when the organization proposed building two more 12-bed homes. He also voiced reservations about placing clients in larger facilities as opposed to smaller family-run group homes.

Several small group-home operators spoke out Monday, seeking what they term as more equitable funding for their homes. Linda Portoluri, of Grand Haven, who cares for two people with multiple disabilities and a third with Down syndrome, said she receives less than half of the funding an organization such as Harbor House receives for care of patients.

"To me, when I make \$77 per day per client versus \$177, it's a big (difference)," Portoluri said.

However, CMH officials say decisions on funding levels usually are made based on an assessment of each client's needs.

At one point, CMH board member Harris Schipper, a former county commissioner, proposed the county pursue a August millage request for mental health services.

"If this passes, we will then have money ... for what we want to spend, how we want to spend it," Schipper said.

No timetable has been set for any meeting between CMH and Harbor House, but Vander Laan said he wants it to happen "as soon as possible."

Wednesday, September 21, 2005

Staying warm this winter may cost more Experts say residents could be hit with 40% increases to heating bills

By ERIN KOSNAC
Port Huron Times Herald

The high gasoline prices this summer slowed Jodie Moses down.

In the summer, Moses, 23, of Clyde Township usually goes for long car rides up north, skirting along Lake Huron. There were none of those scenic trips this year.

Now Moses is bracing for high winter heating bills this winter.

"It's kind of crazy how expensive they're expecting natural gas to get," she said. "We've been insulating our house to try to help keep the bills down this winter, but I don't know if that will even help."

As temperatures start to drop this year, Blue Water Area residents will be paying more to keep their homes toasty, officials at the Michigan Public Service Commission and SEMCO Energy Inc. said.

Commission spokeswoman Judy Palnau said the cost of natural gas in Michigan is expected to skyrocket about 40% this year, partly due to disruptions caused by Hurricane Katrina to natural-gas production facilities along the Gulf Coast. Palnau said based on information from the state's four largest natural-gas companies - SEMCO, Consumers Energy, Michigan Consolidated Gas and Aquila Networks - that would mean an increase of \$39 to \$65 to customers' monthly bills between November and March, provided there are normal weather conditions.

Bill Deedler, climatologist for the National Weather Service in Oakland County's White Lake Township, said he wouldn't have his forecast for this winter ready until early October.

Tim Lubbers is marketing and corporate communications director for SEMCO of Port Huron, which serves about 276,000 customers in Michigan, including 90,000 in St. Clair and Sanilac counties.

Lubbers declined to give an estimate for how much of an increase customers could see this winter, saying a number of variables come into play such as how much gas is used and if any weather-proofing has been done.

"But basically, if you're using the same amount of gas you used last year, you're going to pay a significant amount more for it," Lubbers said.

SEMCO officials also are meeting today to determine the adjustment rate that will be applied to its base gas-cost recovery factor. On Tuesday, the public service commission approved a base gas-cost recovery factor of \$7.9055 per thousand cubic feet. The adjustment rate helps the utility respond to market fluctuations and is adjusted each month through an agreement with the public service commission.

The utility does not make any money off the gas-cost recovery factor. That charge covers what the utility pays for the natural gas.

Ronald Phillips, 55, of Port Huron knows his heating bills this winter are going to be higher. However, he's not too worried because he knows there is nothing he can do about it. Phillips likes the cold weather, but he always makes sure to keep his apartment extra warm when his grandchildren are visiting.

"I just pay my bill and stay warm," he said. "And most of all, I'm just thankful that I've got someplace to live. A lot of people don't right now, so I figure I'm pretty lucky."

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Martin Kushler: Energy costs are Mich.'s storm

Imagine a scenario where government leadership has been advised of an approaching disaster, which will likely create widespread disruption and suffering, tremendous economic costs, and even loss of life ... and that government leadership fails to take action.

We've all watched in horror as that unfolded in the Gulf Coast with Hurricane Katrina.

Ironically, a similar tragedy is looming in Michigan, exacerbated by the ripple effects of Katrina on our energy system.

About five months ago, I commented in these pages on the huge economic costs Michigan was suffering because of our near-total dependence on imported energy (we import 100 percent of the coal, 96 percent of the petroleum products, and nearly three-fourths of the natural gas we use).

At that time these energy costs were already draining more than \$18 billion per year from our economy, and were likely a major factor in our continuing high unemployment rate.

I also pointed out how energy efficiency programs, used successfully in many other states, could save energy at less than half the cost of buying new energy supplies. Yet Michigan utility companies continue to have virtually no funding for energy efficiency programs.

The energy market situation has only worsened since then, with the effects of Katrina being just the latest negative factor. The situation has deteriorated to the point where we now face a true economic crisis this winter, when soaring heating costs begin to strike our citizens and businesses.

Natural gas futures prices for this winter are at levels four or five times higher than they were just five years ago. Oil and propane costs have more than doubled. This energy cost "hurricane" is bearing down on our state.

And what have our government agencies, or our utility companies, done to help citizens and businesses reduce their energy costs through energy efficiency? Absolutely nothing.

Leading states across the country have utility funded programs to provide rebates and other assistance to help customers do things like purchase high efficiency furnaces and add insulation ... actions which can reduce energy consumption by as much as one-third.

There are no such programs for average customers in Michigan.

I've been in the halls of the Legislature, and the hearing rooms of the Public Service Commission. I've seen the special interests like the state Chamber of Commerce, and ABATE (the association representing large industrial customers) and the utilities themselves block efforts to implement energy efficiency programs in Michigan.

This is incredibly short-sighted, because the huge energy dollar drain hurts our state economy, and lowers business activity in Michigan.

It's a sad picture. Michigan is heading into an economic and human crisis this winter with no energy efficiency programs in place for average citizens and businesses. Just like Katrina, the crisis is visible on the horizon and nothing is being done to prepare an effective response.

Energy efficiency is the only defense against the tidal wave of rising energy costs that is crushing our economy.

Other states are ramping up their energy efficiency programs. In Michigan, we're fiddling while the storm approaches.

Martin Kushler of Williamston is director of utility programs for the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, a nonprofit group dedicated to advancing energy efficiency.

Published September 21, 2005

Michigan Works job fair draws 1,800 applicants

Many say they are out of work, jobs are scarce

By Stefanie Murray

Lansing State Journal

Like many of the other 1,800 job seekers at Capital Area Michigan Works' Fall Job Expo 2005 on Tuesday, Anthony Moody and Jenny Crosby aren't looking to change jobs - they need jobs. Now.

Moody, 42, of Lansing, has been out of work for a few weeks and is looking for light industrial, construction or machine operating jobs.

"It's pretty hard to find work right now," said Moody, who came with 10 freshly printed resumes. Crosby's background is in clerical and paralegal work and she's been unemployed for more than a year: "It's a struggle to find a job in the legal field. ... I have to be open to compromise," the 37-year old East Lansing mother of two said.

Crosby and Moody have good company in Michigan. The state's unemployment rate, at 6.7 percent in August, has been one of the highest in the U.S.

A rush of people flooded the ballroom at the Lansing Center as soon as the doors opened at 2:30 p.m.

Many wore suits; most carried portfolios filled with resumes; almost all looked slightly nervous. "Smile - we want happy people working for us, right?" Cathy Wilhm sang out to the job seekers on their way in just after the doors opened. Wilhm is a Lansing Community College service center adviser based at Capital Area's offices.

"They are nervous, and you've got to relax them," Wilhm said before interrupting herself to call out, "That's a nice suit! I like that suit," to a job seeker.

Capital Area spokeswoman Kate Tykocki said 61 employers had booths at the event, and many had multiple open positions.

"If we find just one qualified person, it's worth coming," said Karen Litton, a National City recruiter. "We are always looking for great candidates."

Just over a half-hour into the event, lines had already formed at some of the booths, including Dart Container Corp., Manpower, Sparrow Health System and Ingham Regional Medical Center. The aisles became so crowded at points that it was difficult to walk through, and dozens of people sat along the walls of the room filling out applications.

Moody said he dropped off resumes at Manpower, Speedway SuperAmerica and Valvoline Instant Oil Change, among others.

"I feel better than I did before," he said on his way out. "At least I feel like I've got a better chance now."

Job seeking tips

Got an interview? Great - here are some tips on where to go from there:

- Review the job description thoroughly
- Research the company
- Know your resume and be ready to discuss how your skills fit the job
- Make sure your resume and cover letter are flawless
- Have references available and accessible
- Always bring extra resume copies to an interview
- Bring a notebook to an interview
- Think of the interview like a conversation, not an interrogation
- Start and end an interview with a firm handshake
- Send a short thank-you letter after the interview
- If you don't get the job, politely ask one of the interviewers what they think you need to work on

Source: Michigan Department of Civil Service
Web site

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September 21, 2005

Metro charities fear dip in gifts Residents may feel too tapped out by Katrina

By Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

As Metro Detroiters rush to help devastated Hurricane Katrina survivors, local charities are fretting about their own prospects in the all-important fall giving season.

Area groups are postponing festive fund-raisers and re-evaluating their annual pre-holiday appeals to donors. Many are pitching in to help the Katrina relief effort, too, but fear Metro Detroiters, also enduring rising energy costs, the state's high unemployment rate and a tepid economy, will feel too tapped out to also support causes closer to home.

Last week, officials at Care House in Mount Clemens decided to cancel a fashion show for Monday. The organization aids investigators and others in child abuse cases.

Care House leaders had hoped to sell 250 tickets at \$75 apiece but found that sales weren't exactly brisk. Also, "It seemed inappropriate for us to be having fun at a fund-raiser when so many people are suffering," said Bob Schumann, operations director.

Individual and corporate giving to Katrina victims currently outpaces the immediate response to September 11 and last year's tsunami.

Experts are split on what sort of long-term impact Katrina may have on charitable giving elsewhere. Some predict that donations to local charities may be pinched, but that will be short-lived if giving patterns echo those following the September 11 attacks in 2001 and the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami in Asia.

But others say studies don't always capture the realities of nonprofits and that it's difficult to predict the aftermath of what may be the country's worst natural disaster.

What's more, Michigan's unemployment rate -- at 6.7 percent in August compared to the national average of 4.9 percent -- already was a consideration for local nonprofits and the United Way for Southeastern Michigan, which two weeks ago launched a \$66.5 million campaign on behalf of 155 local agencies.

"We have a steep hill to climb, not only with the response to Hurricane Katrina, but we are in a part of the world where the economy is struggling," said Mike Brennan, chief executive of United Way for Southeastern Michigan, which did not meet its fund-raising goal during the year of the September 11 attacks.

Steve Frazer, a South Lyon resident, doesn't plan to cut back on giving to other charities even though he donated \$1,500 to three hurricane-related charities.

"I felt like I needed to," he said.

However, a Downriver car club that was planning a fund-raising sock hop next month for The ARC Downriver canceled because of the Katrina relief effort. Beverly Witchelhouse, president of the Wyandotte-based organization that serves developmentally disabled residents, said the ARC is instead focusing on their other upcoming fund-raisers.

"We'll just have to get out there to push to raise more," Witchelhouse said.

Doug Laskosky, whose 9-year-old daughter has diabetes, is confident that the American Diabetes Association won't take a hit from donors in spite of the Katrina giving.

"I think people who give to the ADA are still going to give because they want to see a cure," said Laskosky, of Farmington Hills.

Leaders at The AIDS Partnership of Michigan are concerned as they prepare for their annual fund drive. The partnership's major fund-raiser in June missed its goal by \$50,000.

"Out on top of this is the hurricane relief, which is enormously understandable," said Executive Director Barbara Murray. "Our giving was down last year so this could conceivably be the second year in a row."

When Hurricane Katrina pummeled New Orleans and the Gulf Coast late last month, it created enormous needs for the thousands of people evacuated from their homes.

Americans already have donated \$1.06 billion, according to the Chronicle on Philanthropy, which has been tracking giving to the relief. This rate of giving surpasses the response to the September 11 attacks and tsunami during the same time period, but it has not yet reached the total giving to both tragedies: Donations after September 11 exceeded \$2.2 billion, and \$1.3 billion has been collected for tsunami victims.

Research at The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University showed that after the September 11 terrorist attacks, 51.5 percent of fund-raisers surveyed said charitable giving to the relief efforts cut into giving to other nonprofits during the first few weeks of the attacks. But 37.6 percent disagreed.

Individual gifts to the relief efforts of September 11 tended to be small -- 74 percent were \$100 or less, said Patrick Rooney, The Center on Philanthropy's director of research.

Rooney added that although total giving during September 11 relief was among the most collected for a single crisis, it still was slightly less than 1 percent of the estimated \$212 billion given to charities in 2001.

"While it was a huge deal of historical proportions, it was really a ripple on the ocean of philanthropy," Rooney said.

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Legislators buck Romney on welfare

House, Senate OK looser work rules

By Scott S. Greenberger, Boston Globe Staff

September 21, 2005

State lawmakers yesterday rejected Governor Mitt Romney's bid to roughly double the number of Massachusetts welfare recipients who must work, mostly keeping intact work requirements and time limits that are among the most lenient in the nation.

The overwhelming votes in both chambers -- 31-7 in the Senate and 130-20 in the House -- suggest that legislators could override Romney if he chooses to veto the bill on the state's welfare benefits when it reaches his desk.

"I believe we've struck a fair balance," said Representative Antonio F.D. Cabral, who helped draft the House version. "This legislation requires recipients to meet strict work requirements in order to receive benefits, while insuring that we provide the tools recipients need to move into the workplace."

There are about 46,300 Massachusetts families on the welfare rolls. Under the current system, about 11,600 welfare recipients have to work. Romney wants to roughly double that number, eliminating exemptions for pregnant women in the third trimester, mothers with children between 1 and 2 years old, and about 5,600 people who are considered disabled under state standards but not under federal ones. His plan also would impose work requirements on recipients caring for a disabled relative and teenagers in school.

Romney said Monday that "work is a benefit, not a detriment, and providing people an opportunity for work is providing a helping hand."

"It costs us more money to get people back to work than we save by having them work," Romney said. "But work is dignifying, and work gives people a productive future and provides their family with an example that will pay dividends for generations."

In 1995, when the Bay State shifted to a welfare system requiring some recipients to work, it was a pioneer. But a year later the US Congress overhauled the federal welfare law, and today Massachusetts is among the most lenient states when it comes to work requirements and time limits. The Bay State has been operating under a waiver from federal rules since 1995, but the waiver expires at the end of this month, forcing Beacon Hill to act.

More than two-dozen states have avoided some federal work requirements and time limits by setting up separate state-funded programs to provide cash assistance to families who would not qualify under federal rules. Under the House and Senate proposals, Massachusetts would take that approach.

Yesterday, the Senate voted to preserve the current work exemptions and the state's time limit on benefits, which says that a family can only get benefits for two years in any five-year period.

However, the Senate measure would increase the number of hours that nonexempt recipients must work, from the current 20 to 30 hours to between 24 and 40 hours, depending on the age of the children in the household. It also calls for the creation of "family well-being plans" to help people who aren't required to work to overcome their barriers to employment.

"These are all families with identified, documented, and serious barriers to employment," Senator Karen E. Spilka, an Ashland Democrat, said on the Senate floor. "What they need to match their ability and desire with action is the support this bill provides."

Last night, the House adopted a slightly different approach, but one that is likely to have the same effect. Its measure would impose the work requirement on pregnant women in the last stage of pregnancy, but it would grant an exemption if a doctor states that working presents a health risk. It also would require mothers with young children to work, but only if the state can provide child care. And it adopts a five-year lifetime limit on benefits, but recipients can avoid the limit if the state does not provide them with child care, transportation, and job training. The House gave preliminary approval to its measure last night and was expected to finalize it later this week.

Cabral said it is likely that the number of recipients who retain exemptions will be similar to that in the Senate bill. The two chambers will work out the differences later this week.

Like the Senate, the House would ratchet up the hours that nonexempt recipients have to work. Both bills also would preserve the state's system for determining who is disabled and unable to work. The state standard is set by the University of Massachusetts Disabled Evaluation Services. When the Massachusetts welfare overhaul was signed into law in February 1995, there were approximately 103,000 families receiving \$693 million per year in cash assistance. Today's 46,300 families receive about \$313 million per year.

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Collapse of family remains the key to persistent poverty

By Thomas Bray / The Detroit News

In his fascinating chronicle of growing up in Detroit, "Made in Detroit: A South of 8 Mile Memoir," Paul Clemens, a white Catholic from a working-class family, recalls how his black school chums in the 1980s would commonly ask, "Where you stay at?" Not where do you live, which would imply a sense of permanence and attachment, but where do you happen to be roosting at the moment?

In other words, an urban generation raised on the novel "Roots" was coming of age with no roots, other than a bed in a shifting variety of locations. That's no surprise: An estimated 80 percent of children in Detroit are born out of wedlock, a prescription for rootlessness. Nationally, the figure for black children is about 70 percent, according to the Census Bureau.

Among the pictures from New Orleans were lots of heart-rending shots of displaced mothers and children, but few of fathers and husbands. Liberal critics say Hurricane Katrina ripped aside the veil on America's extreme poverty. What it really ripped aside was the veil over the collapse of family, particularly among inner-city blacks, that lies at the heart of poverty.

The late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Harvard sociologist turned Democratic U.S. senator from New York, tried to warn of the problem four decades ago. Things were looking good then for minorities and the poor: The economy had grown, unemployment and poverty had declined by record amounts, the major barriers to equal opportunity had been stripped away by Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Act, and blacks had moved into the middle class. But Moynihan found a sharp rise in single-mother families among blacks. He spelled out the alarming implications in a Labor Department report titled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." As recounted by Kay Hymowitz in a recent article in City Journal, Moynihan argued that "marriage orients men and women toward the future, asking them not just to commit to each other but to plan, to earn, to save and to devote themselves to advancing their children's prospects."

Moynihan concluded that there was a "tangle of pathologies" that would undermine black progress if left unchecked.

Moynihan was accused of "blaming the victims." Never mind that Moynihan had cited Jim Crow and slavery as important contributors to the problem -- though that is questionable, since, as economist Thomas Sowell notes, black marital rates once exceeded those of whites. Anything that muddled the story line of continued white oppression as the main barrier to progress was considered unacceptable -- indeed, racist -- by the civil rights establishment. In addition, feminists were arguing that the nuclear family was an instrument of repression.

"Blaming the victim" is the mantra now being used to try to shut off debate over how to handle the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. President Bush has rushed to pledge virtually unlimited aid for rebuilding New Orleans, including a great deal of social spending.

Bush may think he can do things differently this time, by using vouchers, enterprise zones and so on. But there will be strong pressure to resurrect the Great Society's dependency-creating techniques, ignoring Moynihan's cautionary words about the importance of culture.

It's important for society to get the answers right. Unwed motherhood among whites is now as high as it was among blacks when Moynihan penned his initial his report.

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